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EDITORIAL

Our calendar begins the year with January first; but that point coincides with no natural feature in the contour of our industrial landscape. Weather makes July and August almost of necessity our vacation months, and the natural time to begin a new year comes at the end of vacation. Any time between Labor Day and October first our natural New Year greets us, with a smile on its face and an unmistakable ring in its voice.

The minister who spends the last two weeks of his vacation in a mood of wistful regret, clinging to each passing day, bewailing the swift passage of time, and looking forward with reluctance, even terror, to the new season of church work, is not a happy man. Perhaps he is too old and tired. Perhaps he feels that he is not ideally located in the parish he is serving.

The minister who is so anxious to get back to the work that he resents every day of his last two weeks, wonders that time can pass so slowly, feels constant attacks of homesickness for his cosy study and comfortable harness, and has his bags all packed two days before the time of departure, is in the right frame of mind. His vacation has repaired his tissues and restored his powers. Though the new season may promise neither interesting novelty nor deferred results but only another year of the same old routine, yet he approaches its beginning with a deep, quiet, smooth, all-pervading enthusiasm which is no haphazard brain storm but his own authentic and reliable spirit.

Such a man, whether minister or layman, is fortunate. He has used his vacation properly, deriving from it a freshening of his objective and a revival of his enthusiasm. For every man is face to face with an objective, two of them in fact: a general and a personal. His general objective deals with the everlasting problem: what is the meaning of life? Has it an end in view? How do I, as an individual, fit into it? Only his faith can deal with such a problem; and even faith soon finds it necessary to take refuge in a generality: I have faith that there is something to have faith in. I believe there is a something to vindicate my belief and justify my self-consecration.

The personal objective is quite different. Seemingly, it is clear-cut, definite, and intelligible: Self-gratification; personal health, wealth, power, fame, pre-eminence, universal admiration and honor. Up to a certain point in history, which we call the Renaissance, this personal objective was naught but vanity and a striving after wind for the vast majority of mankind. It was reserved for the few privileged. Therefore the great stream of human attention turned, in despair, to the general objective: Heaven, God's ultimate purpose for human life which contained the only prospect of happiness for the ordinary man. Religion made its promises and flourished. Your resignation, patience, trust, prayer, rectitude and faithfulness in this life of injustice and oppression will earn for you eternal bliss in the future life. God was earnestly sought; conscience was heeded; saintliness was popular.

But the effect of the Renaissance with its Great awakening and its Revival of learning, was to plant in human minds some new ideas. This world is no such hopeless place as man had thought. Its conditions can be improved, its forces controlled and manipulated, its rewards selected and secured. Man himself is no such weakling as he had supposed. By a better knowledge of the world, its constitution, laws and methods, man can actually impose his will upon the world and make his life in the world far nearer his own desire than he had ever dreamed possible.

This discovery, that the world is to a certain extent susceptible to man's desire, had the result of deflecting the stream of man's attention from his general to his personal objective. Never mind heaven; I can make myself rich, powerful, famous, and happy right here and now, in this earthly life. What more do I want? Thus the personal type of objective is almost exclusively the one in operation just now.

But neither type of objective is feasible without the other. To live for the future, ignoring the present, is to forfeit every discipline that makes us fit for the future. To live for the present ignoring the future is to abandon every standard, exaction, and restraint that makes us fit for this present. A well-balanced blend of the two objectives is necessary, for neither has point or value without the other. The modern minister faces a plain but difficult task: to remind this generation of "rugged individualists" that neither objective by itself is enough; that as an individualist a man may pursue his personal objective to the point where he may boast that he is the healthiest, wealthiest, most powerful, most famous and eminent, most admired and honored individual in the world. But all this achievement amounts to exactly nothing at all unless the end result of the process is a man who realizes that with all his wonderful self-cultivation he is not yet an end in himself, but still an instrument in God's hands to secure an end greater than himself, to serve that general objective which is God's Holy Purpose; and humbly finds that place and fits himself into it. This task grows more urgent with each passing year; and should fill any right-minded minister with a tireless enthusiasm that takes him back to his new year of work with renewed eagerness. C. E. P.

HOW CAN CHRIST BE "THE HOPE OF THE WORLD"?

By Henry Hallam Saunderson

This question has been made acute by recent events. The last half of August, in Evanston, Illinois, the World Council of Churches held a conference of world-wide significance. This Council was first organized in Amsterdam, Holland, six years ago, and the Evanston meeting is its second. One purpose of the Council is to strengthen non-Roman Christendom. From more than forty countries, representatives of more than one hundred and sixty denominations assembled. No event in Christian history is quite to be compared with this conference.

Roman Catholics were commanded, by a high authority of that church, Cardinal Stritch, to keep away from the meetings. On the other hand, religious liberals were not invited. All denominations which acknowledge Jesus Christ "as God and Saviour" were asked to send representatives. With many people the first thought must have been that it was gratifying that so many denominations of Christians were coming together in conference. But to many must have come the second thought that it is to be regretted that Christendom is so sadly divided.

We, as liberal Christians, have reason for a deep interest in what was accomplished, and what was not accomplished, at Evanston. The all-inclusive topic of the conference was "Christ, the Hope of the World." And this leads us to ask our question, "How can Christ be the Hope of the World"? In the last session of the conference there was an endeavor to sum up some of the achievements in these words: "For prejudices overcome, misunderstandings removed, sympathies enlarged, insight deepened, and for all advance that has been made toward a common mind, we thank Thee, O God."

Sharing The Lord's Supper

This is not the time or the place for an appraisal of the whole conference, nor is there any reason for belittling its work. But bringing together so many men of so many differing minds revealed some important facts about the divisions of Christendom. Plans were made—and were carried out—for a number of Communion Services. The hope was that many men, differing in their Christian faith, would meet together in these services. The Methodists held a service and gave a broad invitation to men to share in it. The Episcopalians and Anglicans, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, who promoted actively the Council, gave similarly a broad invitation to their Communion Service. But another denomination, conducting their service, invited only those who believe that the bread and wine of the Communion become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Someone of insight made this comment: "Until we can all sit down together, at one table, and partake of the Lord's Supper, we cannot claim to be of one Christian family." There are radical differences of faith as to how such a service should be conducted, what clergymen are qualified to offer the bread and the wine, to whom it should be offered, and the significance of the Communion. We wonder if it will be possible, in the future, to have a Service of Communion, to which all Christians will be invited, each participant having his own opinion as to the meaning of it all. That question can be left for future years.

The Coming of God's Kingdom

Very urgent, however, is another question over which there was sharp disagreement at Evanston, with the disagreement extending itself to the whole Christian world. Here in America we have a denomination called "Adventists." These people believe that Jesus of Nazareth will come to earth again, in visible form. Their major article of faith is "The second coming of Christ." In other Christian denominations there are many people who believe, quite as strongly as do the Adventists, that Christ is to come again to the world. What difference does it make to us that people so believe?

Jesus of Nazareth taught men to believe that the Kingdom of God would be established on this earth. He bid men pray, "Thy Kingdom come." He admonished men to "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness." Among Christian people in Europe there are more members than in America who hold the Adventist faith. Broadly, this takes the form of believing that Christ will come suddenly to this world and establish the Kingdom of God; that the course of history will cease; that the world of our present experience will pass away; that all evil will be destroyed.

The majority of American Christians have been designated as "Activists" because we believe that the Christian Church is to work devotedly for the betterment of the world and the improvement of the human race. The common Adventist belief is that only when Christ comes again will the evils of the world, and of men, be cured; that the world is not really being made better. If we say, "Look at the abolition of human slavery," these Adventists reply that, "While we seem to gain in some things, we lose in others."

So there are millions of people who profess to hold the true Christian faith but who refuse to take part in our inter-denominational movements

for "social service." That idea would check the work of those who believe that the spirit of Christ is with us, and that the Kingdom of God is being formed in this world by all the movements for human betterment.

Building A Better World

At Evanston, the representatives of the many denominations, more than one hundred and sixty in number, were urged to ask God's pardon for their divisions, and for the fulfilment of the prayer of Christ "that they all may be one." The Greek Orthodox Archbishop, Michael, commented that he and his people could not join in any repentance for divisions nor petition for pardon. He said that "In this matter we are sinless. The Holy Orthodox Church alone has preserved in full, and has kept intact, 'the faith once delivered to the saints.'" Representatives of some other denominations did not speak out so frankly, but held similar convictions regarding themselves.

We could wish that at Evanston there might have been a great declaration of the determination to recover an understanding of the Man of Nazareth, to gain a new knowledge of the real religion which that Man held and taught; and to regard that Man and that religion as "The Hope of the World." A vital knowledge of Him and of His religion are not beyond our power of recovery. The liberal Christian faith is the result of an endeavor to make that recovery; and this faith is still the greatest religious faith held by the mind of man.

DID GOD CREATE MAN? OR DID MAN CREATE GOD?

By Edward Jay Manning

While primitive man had vague and woefully inadequate ideas of the nature of the world in which he found himself, he discovered that he was in the presence of something wholly Other and, in accordance with the pathetically limited insight that he had, he reached out for that dimly perceived Presence, which has disclosed Itself down through the ages as man has had the capacity increasingly to become aware of it.

There have been times when the reality of God has been almost unquestioned by men. There have been other times—and our day is such a time—when men have been perplexed about God, and in their perplexity they have often discarded him. What they have discarded however is usually some idea of God which has been so hopelessly inadequate that it has no longer served the need of the times. The recurring thought of God has always advanced to a higher point than the receding tide of unbelief has left it.

That God is a reality and not a figment of man's imagination is best disclosed by thinking of what the thought of God can do for man. This is the pragmatic test; this is to answer our question, not by theoretical speculation, but by bringing it to the light of practical application to the daily needs of men in this tumultuous Twentieth Century.

Consider what the thought of God means to our view of the world. Let us at the outset look at the world through the eyes of a distinguished thinker to whom God is non-existent: "At the end of all our strivings and efforts, science sees our world a frozen clod whirling through emptiness about a cheerless and exhausted sun, bearing on its sides the marks of man's once hopeful activity, fragments of his works of art mixed with glacial debris, all waiting in the dark for milleniums until the final crash, when even the burned out sun shall be shattered in collision with another like it, and the story shall be all over while there is no one to remember, and none to care."

In other words, when we drop the thought of God from our consciousness, then inevitably, if we have the hardihood and ability to think our position through to its logical conclusion, we view a world which came from nowhere, is going nowhere, and whose end is dissolution, without the slightest trace of all the struggles and efforts of man.

If we were all convinced that we had to take this materialist's view of the world, or else prove false to the truth, most of us would somehow accept it. However, before doing so we would want to be sure that there were no other and more hopeful paths which lead to reality. Let me suggest Eddington: "When from the human heart, perplexed with the mystery of existence, the cry goes up, "What is it all about?" It is no true answer to look at that part of experience which comes to us through certain sensory organs, and reply, "It is about atoms and chaos; it is about a universe of fiery globes rolling on to impending doom." Rather, "It is about a spirit, within which truth has its shrine, with potentialities of self-fulfillment in its response to beauty and right." Here is a great mind that will not be content with the husks of materialism.

The more I think about this question, the more I realize how true it is that to believe in this world as the outcome of chance is vastly more difficult than to posit God as its authour and sustainer. When the modern man looks out upon the world in which he lives, he must, if he does any thinking at all, decide as best he can whether it is the result of chance or of purpose. If he should feel impelled by the evidence to cast his lot in favor of belief in chance, then he must bravely face the consequences of that decision

He must be resigned to a world which has no purpose, heart, or mind, or will. But if he can convince himself that the preponderance of evidence favors the view of this world as the setting for an adventure in living which has significance beyond the moment, then there will come to him a feeling that life means intensely and means good. The world will no longer wear the mask of inscrutability; it will cease to be an enigma to which there is no answer; it will be neither unfriendly nor indifferent. Rather, will it become the place where moral issues are being wrought out which cannot be circumscribed by the briefness and fragmentariness of the individual's life. The world will become the stage whereon the drama of life is played to a fitting climax, and where none of the players need be cast in meaningless roles.

Such a view will make a difference in the life of the one who holds it. But such a view is one which must embrace the thought of God. If we could but realize what it would mean to men and women and children to face the world with the courage and confidence which comes from the thought that the world is, after all, God's world, then we would have the most convincing answer to our question. Indeed, so to live that one's life was felt to be assuredly of consequence to the world would mean the beginning of a new day when life would be richer, fuller, more beautiful and radiant.

Again, consider what the thought of God means to ourselves. What are we anyway? Are we creatures of chemical combinations only, or is there that in us which outweighs the stars in value? There are not lacking influential voices which are raised to assure us that we are of little or no consequence: "A parasite infesting the epidermis of a midge among the planets." "An ape who chatters to himself of kinship with the archangels while filthily he digs for groundnuts." "A local disease of the cosmos, a kind of pestiferous eczema."

The point of it all is this: When our faith in God goes, inevitably we lose our faith in man. That is the trouble with non-theistic Humanism. No one can quarrel with the lofty hopes which the Humanist entertains for the individual man and the race. No one can help but admire the emphasis which the Humanist places upon the possibilities which are inherent in man, and which if released would do so much to make of this earth a fairer and brighter place for humankind. No one can for a moment fail to respond to the Humanist's call to work for the abolition of those age-long evils which man has the power to remove if only he could be aroused to do so. But when the Humanist feels that to carry out his mission in behalf of human redemption, he must exclude God as a hindrance, then he runs into difficulties which make his own position vulnerable indeed.

To banish God out of the universe, and say that man will lift himself to the heights of spiritual perfection by pulling on his own bootstraps, is to talk in terms which are, to say the least, crudely egoistic. The extreme claims for the dignity and future greatness of man as heralded by some of the more vocal and blatant of the non-theistic Humanists seem almost humorous when placed in the matrix of their view of the origin of man.

Let the modern man try to think of himself in terms of belief in God, and then in terms of non-belief in God, and he will assuredly find that it makes a vast difference to him whether or not God is taken into consideration. For if one looks at himself from the standpoint of faith in God, then there come flooding into his mind the loftiest thoughts that ever flamed from the human brain: "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" Faith in God does not mean faith in an external power that has created man, and then set him adrift upon the sea of life. Rather does it mean that God is a spirit, and when man truly lives, he lives and moves and has his being in God. So, then, while one may acclaim all those who hold to their faith in the dignity and worth of the individual man, if one would be philosophically sound in his thinking he will find that a high opinion of man is rooted and grounded in an ardent faith in the immanent and transcendent God.

Faith in God leads to faith in Man; and faith in man may well be the ladder by which one climbs toward the realization of the heart of the Eternal.

Did God create man, or did man create God? To be sure, man has always thought of God as the highest and best in human life lifted up to the heights of the Infinite. That man's concepts of God have always been crude and hopelessly inadequate does not mean that God is unreal. Those attempts to picture the immanent and transcendent God seem to me to point to the great reality which the mind of man cannot begin to comprehend, but of which it has adumbrations. Man is incurably determined to find God; for there is that from the realm of the spiritual which impinges upon him and makes him restless until he succeeds. In the words of St. Augustine's great prayer: "Thou hast created us for thyself, and our heart remains restless until it finds rest in thee."

A Unitarian Layman's Viewpoint of the Christian Faith

By Walter S. Blake

The Evangelical churches of the Christian faith have for centuries past emphasized the origin of the Child Jesus as having been born of a Virgin Mother, untouched by man at her conception. This is recounted in the New Testament books, and it is written that an angel of the Lord appeared unto Mary and told her of the Sacred Child she was to bear. It is also recorded that an angel appeared unto Joseph her betrothed, and told him to accept her as his wife when she was already heavy with child.

If we accept this presentation of the Divine Creation of the man Jesus, we must then believe that all the later acts and life of Jesus are true, as manifestations of God in the persons of men on earth. However, to honestly accept this viewpoint, one must not follow the later teachings of the man Jesus literally, for these entirely destroy such a concept.

In his teachings we read in the Bible these statements made both to his close disciples and to the populace at large. "We are all sons of the Father, and the works that I do ye shall do also, only greater works than these, for I go unto my Father." And also the statement: "We are all sons of the same Father"; which in his own words definitely does not ascribe to himself powers from God which were not inherent in all men.

The Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed and taught was an *ordered* world in which the predominant factor was love. This teaching was in direct conflict with the teaching of the Prophets of the Mosaic Law of his race, and brought him into conflict with the hierarchy of the Jewish Church who ruled the Hebraic people with the stern law of "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." It is, therefore, evident that the accomplishment of the recorded miracles by Jesus was in conflict with the knowledge of his times.

His people had over many centuries been taught to believe in a coming Messiah, who would liberate them from the persecutions and bondage of slavery to other more powerful races and peoples. The Messiah, as so conceived, would be a true revival of the Infinite Spirit of Creation in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people, which would lead them to victory and freedom from their over-lords of past centuries. The leader who would proclaim this was the one who would lead them out of this bondage, as had Joshua and Moses of their earlier traditions.

The performance of the many miracles of healing by Jesus filled the common people with joy, for in him they saw the leader who had been promised them by their prophets. Their acceptance of him was demonstrated by the acclaim he was accorded in his triumphal journey to Jerusalem, on the day we now designate as Palm Sunday. Later on, however, at the instigation of their politicians and demagogues, the common people renounced him, which brought about his crucifixion by the Roman Governor, whose function was to act as judge in all questions involving the death penalty.

The great tragedy of this event was not his execution, but the fact that of all the thousands of people who had been healed and benefited by his teaching, not one appeared before Pontius Pilate to rebut the perjured testimony of the Pharisees who persecuted him because they feared he would usurp their place and take control of the Jewish Church.

After this brief summary of the life of Jesus, let us return to the theme of the Virgin Birth of Jesus. He proclaimed and taught that God was love, and his laws were inviolable and ordered. Today we know from biological studies that the human man is reproduced by a union of male and female hormones, conceived, nurtured and grown in the womb of woman after inception. This method is the law of human birth.

True law is a basic principle that is always and eternally the same, "yesterday, today, and forever." When applied it always brings about the same result. This is true whether the field of application is scientific, mathematical, or on its highest spiritual plane. Therefore, since man is created in human form always by the same method of reproduction, it follows logically that Jesus of Naareth, the physical man, must have been born in the same manner.

We have no rule of thumb, however, by which to identify the birth of Christ in men. That is a spiritual awakening and realization of our kinship as sons of the Father God, and therefore heirs to all that Kingdom of Heaven on earth which Jesus the Way-shower conceived it to be, and so taught, to the multitudes of people, to whom he always addressed his great truths in the form of simple easily understood parables. Jesus usually followed that presentation by an explanation of the parable he had used, to his own close followers, when asked by them for an explanation of his words, or what their true meaning was in terms of spiritual significance. In these explanations we find his true philosophy of life, and its Creator God.

God does not break any of his own principles or laws.

Does it not follow naturally and reasonably then, that the so-called Virgin Birth was simply a later glorification of the man Jesus, who was raised to the God-head by his followers, just as

Confucius, Mohammed, and all the other founders of the world's great religions were?

This to me seems a reasonable and sound conclusion, which in no way dims the glorious life and character of Jesus, but makes our following of his teachings more simple, since we are but men primarily and do not consider our spiritual conception to be of the high order of Jesus' own perceptions. He came to be the announcer of a new relationship between God and his children, and to give the world and its people a new teaching that we must learn to love God the Creator, with our whole personality, mind, soul and body, and that we must practice the same love we naturally have for our own friends and family members to include our neighbors of whatever caste or type they are, and learn to live with them in harmonious fellowship, thus creating on earth the promised Kingdom of Heaven.

No one denies that there was a human phase or chapter in the life of Jesus, during which he belonged wholly to our human category, tempted in all points like as we are.

As Unitarians, our sole interest in Jesus centers upon that human phase. He had his religion: his thought of God, his moral incentive, and his habits of worship. This religion of his is what we mean by the word Christian. Our purpose is to preserve and strengthen this Christian essence of Unitarianism.

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I recently read a definition of the church as "a fellowship bent on turning the world upside down," which made me a little uneasy. So was Alexander's army, we might add, so was the Golden Horde, and so, for that matter, is the Communist Party. But what bothers me most about this definition is the way it shifts the emphasis of religion away from the individual man to "the world." I don't suppose it leaves out the possibility that the church might also work some changes in the inner man, but that result would appear to be almost incidental.

To me there is something chilly and remote in this picture. If this is what the church means to us, we ought to know at least where the logic leads. All our stout claims that it is the private man whose cause we espouse melt away. Intent solely on the forest, we lose sight of the trees. The individual becomes an anonymous creature whose name is legion but whose face is never seen. He becomes "Quantity X," a fragment of a mass, and it is the mass, "the world," which consumes our interest, not he. He is always somewhere inside Europe, perhaps, or inside Asia, but never the stranger inside ourselves.

Actually there is no necessary competition between our group desire to turn the world upside down and our individual need to restore the balance of the topsy-turvy world within. There is enough vital force in our religious heritage for both. But we sterilize religion and rob it of its essential qualities of intimacy and immediacy if we make concern about problems half a world away a substitute for our own personal awakening here and now. Religion becomes a power for us only insofar as its imperatives focus inward, informing the mind and transforming the will. We should rejoice in the determination to reach beyond the church which this definition carries with it, but we should never forget that the first requirement is to have a church beyond which to reach.

It is not enough for us to understand that all men are brothers, or even to feel a moral obligation as our brother's keeper. It is not enough to say of the less fortunate "There but for the grace of God go I." We must learn humbly to confess "There indeed go I." We must come to the realization that in some essential respect we are our brother.

I believe that the serenity of Marcus Aurelius' writings owes much to this realization. "All things are implicated with one another," he says, "and the bond is holy. For there is one universe made up of all things, and one God who pervades all things, one substance, one law, and one truth." A man lives in an alien world until he comes to this understanding of his kinship with all men and all things.

J. FORD LEWIS

MAN AGAINST THE CHURCH

We are all filled with pride to see that our ministers are writing books. They may not be great books—some say that the age of great books is passed—but they are honest, sincere, and timely. They indicate a vast amount of reading and sustained thinking. Best of all, they have something to say, definite conclusions to which experience and meditation have brought their authors, and which those authors are eager to share with others.

Many thoughtful men have suggested that as a fellowship of religious liberals our best chance of influencing American Christianity lies not in the number of churches we can enroll, but in the amount of pressure we can bring to bear upon the thinking and point of view, the objectives and practices of other denominations. Such pressure is most effectively applied through books.

Intellectual activity is the most worth-while of all our traditions, and the best worth preserving. Dean Fenn once said that a man's most authoritative guidance for faith and morals is the verdict of his own conscience corrected by the verdicts of other consciences equally respectable. But we cannot correct each other's verdicts unless we know what they are. We must do our share of speaking as well as listening.

One of the more recent of our books is "Man against the Church," by Duncan Howlett, Minister of the First Church in Boston. Here is a most admirable little volume, and exactly of the sort mentioned above: sincere, modest, quiet, stimulating, and good-natured, the work of a gentleman and a scholar who has seen more of life from the layman's point of view than many ministers see, and gives us the result of his observations and deductions.

Why do so many people speak disparagingly of the Church? Because they love the Church and need it, but when they turn to it they are disillusioned and disappointed. The Church never comes up to their expectations, never fulfils their ideal. The reason is plain. The Church is an earthly institution, composed of human beings. It cannot avoid the taint of those hands. It is bound to be what its human constituency makes it. There is something here very much like a vicious circle: we cannot have a model Church until we have model individuals to constitute it. And we cannot have model individuals until we have a model Church to help in the fashioning of them.

Faced with this baffling situation, Mr. Howlett squares away for a fearless and discerning study of the factors involved. In its five parts his book takes up these factors and examines each one with a fairness that none can question, and with a frankness that spares no feelings but never hurts. First: Man, with his craving for that Something Better which he calls Heaven; his need of good government; the political corruptions to which he is usually subjected; his experiment in democracy. Then: the Church to which man naturally turns for help; its present condition, worldly, rigid, exclusive, an end in itself, arrogant, and predacious. Next: efforts to correct the faults in the Church by reformers, daring thinkers, and prophets. Then: efforts to make the Church more democratic, still retaining its order and due authority; and efforts to find its true relation to the State. Finally: a vision of the true Church; its proper authority, its integrity, and the prospect of success in realizing its ideal.

No book could be easier to read than this one. It is not only brief, but written in a most interesting way. The style is conversational and personal: you and he are having a little talk about men and churches and religion. Dr. Gordon used to say that his forty three years of preaching in Boston's Old South Church had been nothing but forty three years of thinking out loud. Mr. Howlett's book is two hundred and thirty pages of thinking very quietly in print, with all the little whimsical turns of expression, colloquialisms, and wise-cracks that a man will mutter to himself as he tries to express himself. Also, a bit of the tendency to redundancy which one will show when absorbed in thought.

Perhaps the clearest effect of the book upon the reader is to awaken his indignation. For example: Man is against the Church; there can be no doubt about it. But why? What is Man? A combination of spirit, with its craving for Heaven, and body, with its determination to survive in a sordid struggle for existence. An impossible combination. Would it not be better to simplify things at the start; decide which is preferable, spirit or body, and concentrate all energies on the single objective? But we soon find that to renounce the body is to frustrate the spirit, and to renounce the spirit is to render the body unfit for earth. Remember Professor Charles Bennett's description of the young businessman who has denied the spirit in him and divested himself of every vestige of that life of the spirit which we call Religion: "You see a mixture of unscrupulousness and cruelty, but he is cruel, in the words of one of Mark Rutherford's characters, 'not with the ferocity of the tiger, but with the dull insensibility of the cart-wheel.'" It is exactly these human cart-wheels, blinded by their selfish ambition, unconscious of the harm they do and the pain they cause, who constitute our public enemy Number One. Our jails are full of them; but there are still too many at large.

We cannot renounce either component in our human combination. We must reconcile them somehow; perhaps the Church can help. But what is the Church? Calvinism says a Church is a body of the elect, who, unfortunately, have not as yet shuffled off this mortal coil. We say that a Church is the place where people are at their best. Or, the Church is the one institution in modern society whose business it is to remind human beings of their better natures, and ask them to contemplate with regret the chasm " 'Twixt the Blondel God meant, and a Blondel I know of."

Then there is something unreasonable in this habit of criticising the Church for its faults. Why cannot man see that the Church merely reflects his own dual composition: a spirit with its heavenly aspirations pent in a social organism dooomed to exist on earthly levels and deal with earthly facts and conditions?

Perhaps the biggest mistake the Church ever made is teaching men to expect too much of it; that it is of divine institution and origin, perfect in every respect, beyond man's criticism. Even if it were so, such a Church would be useless. A recent English writer has suggested that the basic purpose of this earthly life is discovery and discipline. Its technique consists in man's willingness to make mistakes. The world is perfect precisely because it is imperfect. It contains perils that man must learn to detect and overcome; errors that man must blithely make and at once assimilate the lesson they teach; temptations that man must train himself to resist.

The same can be said of the Church. With the sole stipulation that the Church shall never forget its role—to be the embodiment and articulation of the best in human nature and human life—the Church must maintain the closest contact with man, go where he goes, be what he is, share his experience, speak his language. Man is a mass of pitch: the Church must dare to keep in intimate touch with him and take the risk of defilement.

We suspect that nine times out of ten those who put themselves against the Church are only seeking an excuse for their own wilful neglect of the Church. The fair-minded man must see that it is not the Church's first business to be pure and true, but to help its members to become pure and true. Reading *Pilgrim's Progress* we notice that every member of Christiana's company gets the summons to cross the River and enter the Celestial City, except Mr. Greatheart, their guide. The presumption is that he goes back to the Interpreter's House to take charge of another band of pilgrims. The Church is a sort of Mr. Greatheart. It is not heaven that needs him, but earth. In fact, St. John tells us explicitly: "I saw no temple therein." Being of earth, the Church can hardly be expected to resist successfully all earthly contamination. What man among us can clean out the furnace without getting his hands all sooty?

The wonder is that the Church has kept itself so clean. Like the man cleaning the furnace, it has held one intention constantly in mind: I am here to clean up this world, and make it fit for God's Kingdom. A long, difficult, complicated job. I shall have to scrub a lot of territory, poke into countless corners and crevices, get covered with filth. But God will understand even if man does not. So the Church lives man's life with him, an unfailing companion, following him into the darkest cracks and dens, falling with him when he falls but with a drag upon his decline, rising with him when he rises with an added lift to his buoyancy, a constant gentle pressure toward Something Better, always a quiet whisper of honor, and justice, and manhood, and self-respect, and God.

Here is but one humble reaction to the book. To get a better one, read it for yourself; it will be a rewarding experience. ED.

THE IMMEDIATE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS

Except for Peter, James, John, Andrew, and the rest of the Twelve Disciples, who had the privilege of knowing him at first hand, Jesus as an historic personality is, always has been, and probably always will be a mystery. The three Synoptic Gospels tell us a few things about him; and by what they imply or suggest they encourage us to think somewhat more. The Gospel of John is useless to the seeker of facts. Without doubt it contains words that he actually spoke, and deeds that he actually did. For example, the story of the Samaritan Woman, Chapter 4, verses 4-29, and the story of the Greeks who wished to see him, Chapter 12, verses 20-29, are in such striking contrast to the general tone of the Fourth Gospel, and so full of thinly veiled undertones of real human feeling, that we feel justified in accepting them as authentic. As for the story of the Woman taken in Adultery, Chapter 8, verses 2-11, a study of the manuscripts will show that the passage has been lifted from the Gospel of Luke and adapted to the writer's purposes in the Fourth Gospel.

Then too there are scattered sayings in the Gospel of John that sound a great deal more like Jesus the man, than like the clammy, aloof, unfeeling "Word made Flesh" of the Fourth Gospel. The trouble is, however, that there is no infallible way of detecting the authentic passages; therefore, it is the custom of historians to simply

ignore the Gospel of John, and confine themselves to the Synoptics. For these reasons, and at this late date, it seems safe to predict that the personality of Jesus will remain a mystery save for the few general intimations that are given us in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Thus it is not Paul but Jesus who has become "all things to all men." Nothing prevents any earnest follower from arranging the few facts that we have into whatever pattern of personality strikes him as being the Model Personality. In other words, Jesus has become Everyman's Ideal. Perhaps that is the happiest fate that could befall him; because now he belongs to everyone. Looking at him is like looking at an enchanted mirror: what we see is not necessarily the Man of Galilee; it is ourselves at our best, as we think we ought to be and might be; our own ideal of ourselves, sharply focused and clearly delineated.

It may be presuming in one man to offer his hint as to the oustanding trait in the personality of Jesus, and to pick out the one moment in the history of man's life as the moment at which that trait has the greatest significance. For there is not a single moment in all history at which Jesus the Ideal Man does not have some immediate significance. This suggestion is only one man's notion, and is offered for what it is worth, and in all modesty.

The outstanding fact about Jesus of Nazareth was his ability to love God with all his might, and to make that love the constant irresistible incentive for every thought, choice, motive and action. To hear a Divine Voice whispering to his inmost conscience "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased," transfigured him to the heights of ecstacy. To forfeit God's loving pride was to be cast into "the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth." No sacrifice of bodily comfort was too great to make to avoid that horror. When we recall the sentence in the Gospel of John: "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me" we feel that we are really quoting him. The words are exactly what we should expect him to say. To do God's will was food and drink to his spirit.

He literally had no choice; he must put God's will first no matter what it cost him. God had a purpose; a business in hand; an end in view. And he must be about his Father's business, for otherwise his professed love for God was merely so much hot air. Jesus was never without an incentive to live and labor. He did not know what it was to be aimless. His enthusiasm for life, with its daily opportunities for service never flagged. He was never satisfied with things as they are.

It is precisely in this respect that he possesses an immediate significance at this moment in our history. Many observers have called attention to our lack of incentive, our aimlessness, our easy satisfaction with partial results and half-won victories. "Enough is enough" we say; "This is all we want. Why strive for something better?"

Our Colored People are not the only ones who "are climbing Jacob's ladder." Every one of us is climbing Jacob's ladder, all the time. In itself the fact ought to be its own incentive; for ladders are uncomfortable things, with no chance to rest, and nothing to do but keep climbing till the top is reached. But with our ingenuity, and by means of a thousand and one mechanical gadgets and devices, we have turned our ladder of progress into a grand staircase. We can saunter up eight or ten steps of broad treads and easy risers, and behold, the grand staircase broadens out into a landing, spacious, cosy, inviting, adorned with "storied windows richly dight." All that we happen to want at the moment may be found on that landing. Why climb higher? We cleanse our souls of all these trouble-makers called "incentive," "enthusiasm for life," "Divine discontent," and bog down on the landing, and call it a day.

For millions of people this landing means long-drawn-out discomfort, not to say oppression and misery. That is too bad, of course; but that is their business. The landing gives us what we want; and we propose to stay on it. We may be aimless but we are comfortable. We may be complacent but we are content. Do not talk to us about "onward and upward forever." Onward and upward until we reach our favorite landing is all we ask.

We need just what Jesus had: a constant incentive to press on, a zest for life, an ever-active enthusiasm for the brighter scenes and larger skies of the future. We ought to know by this time that the gift of life is offered, not to one people or nation, but to Broad Mankind; and that the most precarious position any single nation can occupy is the position that seems to offer security and happiness to it alone while the rest of the world is in anxious misery. Human happiness is never genuine until it is universal.

The most difficult item in our faith is the conviction that such a happiness awaits humanity —a Moment Blest, a Great Day of the Lord, one far-off Divine Event to which the whole creation moves, God's Purpose fulfilled and victorious, if not in this chapter of life, then in some future chapter. That item is included in our faith, and may not safely be forgotten. We need to learn from Jesus not only his love for God and the incentive that love taught him, but also his ability to work in the dark, for an end he could neither see nor describe but which he knew, by faith, was in God's thought; and that he must labor for it till the last ounce of strength was gone, and the last breath spent. *Contributed*

Prayer

The day-spring dawns upon our eyes, O God, and fills us again with the old wonder of the sunrise, the miracle of creation, the order and the constancy of thy being. We come before thee ready to praise, and eager to praise, feeling that our welcome to the new day is incomplete without an offering of gratitude unto thee. From thy treasuries of time all days are given unto us; from thy steadfast loving-kindness all mercies and familiar safe-guards are continued unto us.

Accept our offerings, and let them be purified in the acceptance. Help us to use thy Sabbath for our greatest good. If we are wearied and spent by the labors of the week, let us find its rest from toil, its bodily and spiritual refreshment. If we are distorted in our vision, unbalanced in our judgments, or if the feverish interests of life have engrossed our attention and over-asserted their little importance, let thy Sabbath help us to re-discover the inner harmonies of life, and to know again its forgotten peace and poise and concord. Or if we are full of shame for sins committed and good undone, for acts and words of self-forgetfulness and self-betrayal, help us to find thy Sabbath forgiveness, thy repeated promise of understanding love.

If we are discouraged by a sense of the futility of endeavor let us find rebuke in thy Sabbath promise of the newness of life; that new opportunities await us this coming week; that thy love is new every day, and will lead us into new enthusiasms of hope and determination. So help us to watch the old failures and disappointments drift into the oblivion of the past, and to face the coming days as new creatures made over in love and trust and high resolve, filled with a fresh vision of life's promise, and blest with a new love for thy Christ.

Lord, thy self-manifestations are limited only by our own blindness. Touch our eyes if not with insight at least with reverence. Open our minds if not unto knowledge at least unto faith. Remind us how many impossible things in the past have proved their truth to our knowledge; and in our pride of intellect let that remembrance teach us humility. Thou art holding in store for us things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which defy our powers of conception. That which hath been is that which shall be. The surprises that await us shall exceed the surprises that we have known; thou wilt still deal bountifully with us. Let humility bring teachableness, and the trustfulness of little children. So lead us on into thy vaster skies and wider horizons, our hearts filled with wonder, love, and praise. Thine be the glory, world without end: Amen.

Jesus marks the point in history at which it becomes possible for man to adopt consciously as his own purpose the purpose which is already inherent in his own nature.

John Macmurray

The God of Power is not God, but Superman created by man in his own worst image. He is not the God who lives in our hearts when we love and pity and forgive, but Caesar become absolute. Communion with the God of mercy and love is worship in spirit and in truth, but to bend our knee to the God of power is blasphemy.

X

I never give God thanks for loving me, because he cannot help it; whether he would or no, it is his nature to.

Meister Eckhart

Let his spirit touch us; let the great solitariness of his loving heart move us; let us rise up to follow when he calls; let us put him to the test of practice, and such power comes upon us as nothing else is able to bestow.

Jesus is the center of God's providence for man. As manifestly we are sent here to carry on a spiritual strife toward immortal issues, so manifestly was Jesus of Nazareth sent here to be the leader of mankind in the transfiguration of the world.

Jesus demanded nothing that time can change. He made essential only what is everlasting. He commanded no form of words which the progress of the ages leaves unintelligible. The will of God as hunger and thirst, and food and drink; the love of the perfect through pain and darkness; and the bearing of a cross as our one solution and fulfillment;—the supremacy of the soul above institutional coercions, above synagogues which will cast us out, above governors and kings who will summon us for sentence and penalty; the lonely way with one presence to suffice us—this is his deathless gospel, the creator of a new type of mind in us, the guarantee of a new age for this world.

Jesus stands forth as a man of will. In the swiftness of his decision, in the finality of his resolution, in the uncompromising sharpness of his demands, in the challenging and stinging hyperbole with which he tried to arouse the indolent and the conventional, we see a man sure of himself, sure of his universe, sure of his God. Forever he set religion beyond the powers of decadence; for decadence there cannot be where there is a dedicated will, a soul conscious of its call, a heart quickened by the living reality of a supreme attachment.

W. L. Sullivan

Every Christian must be Christ himself.

Angelus Silesius

Unitarian Christian Fellowship

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